

Senate Bill No. 923

CHAPTER 801

An act to amend Section 13269 of the Water Code, relating to water.

[Approved by Governor October 10, 2003. Filed
with Secretary of State October 11, 2003.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 923, Sher. Water quality: waivers.

Existing law, the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, provides that a regional board may waive certain waste discharge requirements for specific discharges or specific types of discharges if the waiver is not against the public interest. The act provides that the waivers are subject to conditions.

This bill, instead, would authorize the state board or a regional board to waive those waste discharge requirements if certain requirements are met. The bill would require the conditions of the waivers to include, with certain exceptions, the performance of individual, group, or watershed-based monitoring duties. The bill would authorize the state board or a regional board to include as a condition of the waiver the payment of an annual fee. The bill would require the funds generated by the payment of the fee to be deposited in the Water Discharge Permit Fund for expenditure, upon appropriation, by the state board or the appropriate regional board to establish and implement the waiver program. The bill would require the state board or regional board to provide notice regarding the adoption of a waiver.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 13269 of the Water Code is amended to read:

13269. (a) (1) On and after January 1, 2000, the provisions of subdivisions (a) and (c) of Section 13260, subdivision (a) of Section 13263, or subdivision (a) of Section 13264 may be waived by the state board or a regional board as to a specific discharge or type of discharge if the state board or a regional board determines, after any necessary state board or regional board meeting, that the waiver is consistent with any applicable state or regional water quality control plan and is in the public interest. The state board or a regional board shall give notice of any necessary meeting by publication pursuant to Section 11125 of the Government Code.

(2) A waiver may not exceed five years in duration, but may be renewed by the state board or a regional board. The waiver shall be conditional and may be terminated at any time by the state board or a regional board. The conditions of the waiver shall include, but need not be limited to, the performance of individual, group, or watershed-based, monitoring, except as provided in paragraph (3). Monitoring requirements shall be designed to support the development and implementation of the waiver program, including, but not limited to, verifying the adequacy and effectiveness of the waiver's conditions. In establishing monitoring requirements, the regional board may consider the volume, duration, frequency, and constituents of the discharge; the extent and type of existing monitoring activities, including, but not limited to, existing watershed-based, compliance, and effectiveness monitoring efforts; the size of the project area; and other relevant factors. Monitoring results shall be made available to the public.

(3) The state board or a regional board may waive the monitoring requirements described in this subdivision for discharges that it determines do not pose a significant threat to water quality.

(4) (A) The state board or a regional board may include as a condition of a waiver the payment of an annual fee established by the state board in accordance with subdivision (f) of Section 13260.

(B) Funds generated by the payment of the fee shall be deposited in the Waste Discharge Permit Fund for expenditure, upon appropriation by the Legislature, by the state board or appropriate regional board for the purpose of carrying out activities limited to those necessary to establish and implement the waiver program pursuant to this section. The total amount of annual fees collected pursuant to this section shall not exceed the costs of those activities necessary to establish and implement waivers of waste discharge requirements pursuant to this section.

(C) In establishing the amount of a fee that may be imposed on irrigated agriculture operations pursuant to this section, the state board shall consider relevant factors, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

- (i) The size of the operations.
- (ii) Any compliance costs borne by the operations pursuant to state and federal water quality regulations.
- (iii) Any costs associated with water quality monitoring performed or funded by the operations.
- (iv) Participation in a watershed management program approved by the applicable regional water quality control board.

(D) In establishing the amount of a fee that may be imposed on silviculture operations pursuant to this section, the state board shall



consider relevant factors, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

- (i) The size of the operations.
- (ii) Any compliance costs borne by the operations pursuant to state and federal water quality regulations.
- (iii) Any costs associated with water quality monitoring performed or funded by the operations.
- (iv) The average annual number of timber harvest plans proposed by the operations.

(5) The state board or a regional board shall give notice of the adoption of a waiver by publication within the affected county or counties as set forth in Section 6061 of the Government Code.

(b) (1) A waiver in effect on January 1, 2000, shall remain valid until January 1, 2003, unless the regional board terminates that waiver prior to that date. All waivers that were valid on January 1, 2000, and granted an extension until January 1, 2003, and not otherwise terminated, may be renewed by a regional board in five-year increments.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), a waiver for an onsite sewage treatment system that is in effect on January 1, 2002, shall remain valid until June 30, 2004, unless the regional board terminates the waiver prior to that date. Any waiver for onsite sewage treatment systems adopted or renewed after June 30, 2004, shall be consistent with the applicable regulations or standards for onsite sewage treatment systems adopted or retained in accordance with Section 13291.

(c) Upon notification of the appropriate regional board of the discharge or proposed discharge, except as provided in subdivision (d), the provisions of subdivisions (a) and (c) of Section 13260, subdivision (a) of Section 13263, and subdivision (a) of Section 13264 do not apply to a discharge resulting from any of the following emergency activities:

(1) Immediate emergency work necessary to protect life or property or immediate emergency repairs to public service facilities necessary to maintain service as a result of a disaster in a disaster-stricken area in which a state of emergency has been proclaimed by the Governor pursuant to Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 8550) of Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

(2) Emergency projects undertaken, carried out, or approved by a public agency to maintain, repair, or restore an existing highway, as defined in Section 360 of the Vehicle Code, except for a highway designated as an official state scenic highway pursuant to Section 262 of the Streets and Highways Code, within the existing right-of-way of the highway, damaged as a result of fire, flood, storm, earthquake, land subsidence, gradual earth movement, or landslide within one year of the damage. This paragraph does not exempt from this section any project



undertaken, carried out, or approved by a public agency to expand or widen a highway damaged by fire, flood, storm, earthquake, land subsidence, gradual earth movement, or landslide.

(d) Subdivision (c) is not a limitation of the authority of a regional board under subdivision (a) to determine that any provision of this division shall not be waived or to establish conditions of a waiver. Subdivision (c) shall not apply to the extent that it is inconsistent with any waiver or other order or prohibition issued under this division.

(e) The regional boards and the state board shall require compliance with the conditions pursuant to which waivers are granted under this section.

(f) Prior to renewing any waiver for a specific type of discharge established under this section, the state board or a regional board shall review the terms of the waiver policy at a public hearing. At the hearing, the state board or a regional board shall determine whether the discharge for which the waiver policy was established should be subject to general or individual waste discharge requirements.

